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## THE FINGER OF HANKIN.

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AUTHOR OF 'THE RECIPE FOR DIAMONDS;' 'HONOUR OF THIEVES,' &c.

### CHAPTER I.

HE was called William Edward Hankin Seale, and by giving him the name of Hankin, his godfathers and godmothers considered that they had provided him with brilliant prospects. Wherefore they economised, and forbore to add the usual christening-mug and silver feeding-tackle. In after years William Edward Seale had it constantly repeated to him that there was a man called Hankin who lived on a place called the West Coast of Africa, where he had amassed wealth, and was still amassing.

In his school-days William Edward Seale said little about the vague Hankin. He learned that West Africa was a considerable distance from Charterhouse in miles; that the climate was hot, through some connection which it had with a thing called the equator, upon which the sun apparently travelled as a bead does upon a wire; and that the Coast produced gold-dust, ivory, and monkeys. Afterwards he got hold of *The Cruise of the Midge*, and added to this list of products, slaves, fever, sunstroke, and picturesque fighting. He pictured Hankin as a king of countless negroes, who owned a long black schooner for nefarious purposes, and who went out for rides on his own private elephant and ate cocoa-nuts free of cost. He rather envied the old gentleman, but he did not swagger about him then. Later, however, he did both.

He went from Charterhouse to a bank in London, where he laboured easily, but acquired no unwieldy prosperity. He lived slightly beyond his income, but kept the leeway in check by waving Hankin before the eyes of his duns. He pointed out that the West Coast was notoriously unhealthy, and that Hankin could

not live much longer. He was generous in the matter of interest too. He said that when he put on a black tie for Hankin, they would see that there was nothing mean about him when he came to pay for accommodation. So he lived on; and the rumours of Hankin provided him gratis with dances and theatre paper; and dinners and Sunday river-parties were bestowed upon him by people who had marriageable daughters. 'It's no use your asking me to pay for anything,' he would say cheerfully. 'I've barely a sixpence beyond my salary—at present.'

Occasionally he came across some man who had been in the colonial service or in a trading house on the West Coast, and asked about his connection, who, he stated, was some sort of a nineteenth cousin. But none of the Coasters ever knew about Hankin, or (what is perhaps more accurate) they never said they knew. So, as far as William Edward Seale was concerned, Hankin remained vague and nebulous; but Seale never lost faith in his riches and dutiful cousinly affection (as bespoken by the afore-mentioned godparents); and calculated on the approaching windfall with certainty and sweet delight.

It was the coming of Captain Charteris with Nancy that gave him his first definite idea of Hankin. Charteris wired from Liverpool to ask for an interview, and was invited to come up and dine at the club and talk matters over there. Charteris came, and enjoyed his meal, as most men do after a course of Coast and steamer fare; but he talked whilst he was eating, and what he said did woful damage to Seale's appetite. Afterwards they went to

a quiet corner of the billiard-room for coffee and cognac; and between whiffs of a good cigar, Charteris went on with his tale:

'We aren't mighty particular out there as a general rule, y' know, but that was a bit too blackguardly and low for anything. They kicked him out of the service, of course; and they told him that if he didn't clear out of the colony one-time, they'd prosecute him to boot, and he'd get sent home to do five years for an absolute cert. So he cleared; and went to Lagos.'

'But he was very rich at that time, wasn't he?' Seale asked.

'Rich? He owned the finest assortment of debts of any man in Accra. They had to pay his steamer-fare to get him away. I don't believe the old scamp ever did have a cent beyond his pay, but he'd a knack of hinting that he was a millionaire, and people sometimes believed him. He blarneyed himself into a trading house in Lagos on the strength of swaggering about money, which of course he hadn't got, and he might have worked himself back into a comfortable position if he had only chosen to keep straight. But that was not his way. He hung on there for a couple of years till he'd got his fingers well into the pie, and then one fine day he pulled out all the plums that were available and skipped by the British-African boat to Grand Canary. He'd about a thousand pounds all told in his pocket when he landed at Las Palmas, and on the strength of it he married that pretty little woman I was telling you about, who died when Nancy was born.'

'After which he took the child back to the Coast again, and brought her up like a savage?'

'No, he didn't; and that's about the only good point I ever heard the old ruffian accused of. He left her in Grand Canary, farmed her out (don't you call it?) in a village just outside Las Palmas, and went back again to the Coast to find money for the up-keep of her. It was a pretty plucky thing to do, because several gaols were waiting for him anxiously, and he'd dirtied his ticket so thoroughly up and down, that no white man would touch him with the end of a swizzle-stick. What he did was to steam down-coast to Lagos Roads, change over to the branch-boat and get across the bar, and then slip away from her by native canoe. He didn't land on the island at all. He went off over the lagoon, and then on, right up to the back of the Egba country. There was a hot war on then with the Yorubas, and it was about nine to one he got knocked on the head and chopped; but somehow the old scamp slipped through, and then he started in to collect rubber. He got a mud-and-grass hut built, and lived on native chop, and must have had a pretty tough time of it at first, because all the roads were blocked, and he could neither get "trade" up-country nor send his rubber down. But after a bit, things went better with him. He got his rubber carried down to Lagos, contrived to lay hold of a few domestic slaves to do his work, and was able to send remittances to the woman who farmed Nancy outside Las Palmas. If he'd stuck to what he'd made

then, he might have lived pretty comfortably, because trade-gin makes tolerable cocktails when you're used to it, and up in that part of the bush you can always get chickens and mutton if you care to pay. But he didn't do that: he stuck to the cheap native chop; and when he had fever he grudged himself pills and quinine: it took him all he knew to scrape up eighty pounds a year for Nancy.'

'Oh, my hat!' said Seale; 'and I thought that man was a millionaire!'

'I wish,' said Charteris, 'you could have seen him when I did. I was up at the back of the Egba country with a Commission, and we picked up the wood-smoke of his cooking one day in the dusk. We had missed the village we were trying for, and had no fancy for collecting fever by squatting out in the bush. So we pushed on and came upon a few chimbeques in a clearing. A thing that called itself a white man was in one of them, and that was Hankin. He was down with black-water fever, and when the doctor had done a turn with him, I went in to stand my watch. He wasn't an inviting spectacle, and if you knew what black-water fever is—which you don't—you'd understand why. But he was a white man, or had been white once, and out there one feels a sort of kinship to one's colour. So I sat by the poor devil and heard his yarn; and when he asked me a bit of a favour, I couldn't very well refuse it, because, you see, he asked when he was in the very act of pegging out. He wanted me to pick up this youngster of his as I was going home, and hand her over to you.'

'But why to me of all people?'

'Hankin said,' replied the other stolidly, 'that he knew you thought you'd some claim on him, and that therefore he considered he'd a claim on you. I said I didn't see the force of his argument. He said that was his palaver, and would I do what I was asked, or have a very nasty taste left on my conscience by refusing? So of course I was forced to say "Yes," and there was an end of the matter. The Houssas buried him at sunrise, and we marched on.'

'But what on earth am I to do with the brat? I'm making a poor enough show of keeping myself. I had—er—expectations once, but they haven't come off, and I'm more largely dipped than I care to think about. I'm only a poor brute of a bank clerk with half-nothing a year by way of pay. It strikes me you've done somebody a pretty mean turn.'

'How could I help myself?' said Charteris with a shrug. 'I didn't know you from Adam, and Hankin shoved the job on to me at a peculiar time. You haven't seen a man die the way he did, in a bush hut, with no one round but savages, or else you'd understand. I can quite imagine it's an unpleasant surprise to you; but you know—you needn't take over the youngster.'

'What?' said Seale quickly; 'you'll keep her on yourself?'

Captain Charteris laughed harshly. 'I shall drag out my own leave here in England mostly on tick, and then get back to the Coast again.'

Man, I haven't thirty pounds in the world. I couldn't afford to be saddled with a dog. I suppose it comes to this: we shall both repudiate her.'

'And the result will be?'

'Workhouse, I suppose.'

'What a ghastly thing to think about!'

'My dear sir, we can gather comfort from knowing it's no fault of ours. It's a case of "sins of the fathers." Hankin shouldn't have been a blackguard; or if he was, he shouldn't have married; or if he did marry, he shouldn't have allowed Nancy to step out into the world. If he's any sense of decency left, Hankin will be gnashing his teeth this very minute at the thought of the mischief he's brought about.'

Seale hit the table in front of him so that the cigar ashes jumped. 'This is a horrible business anyway,' he said, 'but it's got to be put an end to. The more we think over it, the worse it gets. You and I have no legal responsibility; so we'll just hand over this calamitous brat to the police, and shuffle clear of the whole matter. Where have you stowed her?'

'At the "Metropole." We'll go there one-time if you like.'

'Yes,' said Seale, and strode noisily out of the room.

#### CHAPTER II.

They exchanged only one remark on the way across. 'She's a taking little beggar,' said Charteris, 'though I don't think she cares much for me.' Upon which Seale broke out against him with sudden violence and profanity, and insisted on the subject being dropped. And after that they marched down Northumberland Avenue in silence.

'It's right up at the top,' said Charteris, as they walked into the hall of the hotel. 'I economised in the matter of rooms. So we may as well go up by the lift. Shall I tell the porter to have a four-wheeler ready in five minutes?'

'Oh, do anything you like,' said Seale. 'No, you needn't bother about that now, though. There are cabs always ready. Here, come along: there's a lift just going up.'

Two minutes later Captain Charteris opened a door and showed Seale a pretty child of six asleep in a deep arm-chair. She woke as they came into the room, nodded to Charteris, and stared at his companion critically. For once in his life Seale was tongue-tied before a lady. He somehow or other felt unutterably mean, though (as he carefully explained to himself) there was no just cause for this feeling. And as an effect, all initiatory small-talk left him. There was a long silence in the room, and it was the child who just broke it. 'You must be the gentleman,' said she to Seale, 'who is going to take care of me?'

'No,' he answered sullenly, 'I am not.'

'Oh,' said Nancy, leaning back in her chair again, 'I am sorry for that.'

Seale could not help asking 'Why?'

'Because,' came the answer, 'I like you. I like you better than him,' she added, with a nod across at her steamer escort.

'This is gratifying,' said Charteris. 'But I am afraid, young lady, that it is a rather useless avowal. Now we've come to take you out for a drive somewhere. So suppose you put on your hat and jacket.'

'Can't,' said Nancy cheerfully. 'I've not begun to dress myself yet. I'm not growed up enough for that. But you,' she said, with a nod at Seale, 'can put on my things for me if you like. They're all lying there on that sofa. Shoes first.'

'Oh, look here,' said Charteris, 'we'd better ring for the stewardess—chambermaid, I mean.'

'No,' said Seale; 'I may as well do what I can for the kid! Hang it man! let me do something. God knows I'm feeling brute enough as it is.'

So with infinite pains and clumsiness he put on Nancy's outdoor raiment, and when he had finished, he stepped back to overlook his handiwork.

'Well?' she said.

'What?' he asked.

'Don't I look nice?'

'Ye-es, I suppose you do. Yes, distinctly you do.'

'Then what are you waiting for?'

'I don't understand.'

'The others,' said Nancy judiciously, 'when they dressed me, and when I was good, and when I looked nice, always gave me a kiss to finish up.'

Charteris laughed.

Seale turned on him savagely with a 'Drop that?' Then he stooped and took hold of the child's hand and said, 'Come on.'

'Kiss first,' said Nancy. 'I've been good.'

Shamefacedly Seale pecked at her with his mouth, and Charteris laughed again. 'I wouldn't do it,' said Charteris, 'if I were you. That sort of thing leaves a nasty taste afterwards—when you remember she is rigged in workhouse uniform, you know.'

Seale kissed the child again, this time more scientifically. 'Now, look here,' he said: 'we'll just drop that foolishness, please, for always. If you think I'm going to let this jolly little beggar go to the parish pauper shop, you're badly mistaken. What will become of her in the end, I'm hanged if I know; but for the present, and until something turns up, I'm going to take her off to my own rooms; and I guess my landlady and I'll dry-nurse her between us. We shall probably make a poor enough job of it, because funds are very scarce; but I guess we're about the only opening Nancy has before her at present.—Come along, Nancy, and we'll drive off in a rubber-tyred hansom to my palatial chambers.'

'I say,' said Charteris, as they were going back along the corridors, 'you're rather a good sort, you know.'

Seale turned upon him with a sudden glow of passion. 'I'm about the most unlucky brute in London this minute,' he cried, 'and if there's one man I ought to hate, that's you. You've landed me in an infernal mess, and there's no getting out of it. You knew what she was; you'd seen her; and I don't think you did the fair thing not telling me beforehand. Of course,

I thought that, being Hankin's kid, she'd be—well, just fit for the workhouse. How was I to know that she was like this?'

'You're a bit unreasonable.'

'I'm not going to argue with you,' said Seale. 'The thing's done, and I've got no use for you any further.'

'I don't quite take your meaning.'

'Well, it's this, Captain Charteris: what little I've seen of you will last me the rest of my time. You may say good-bye to Nancy if you like, but you needn't bother to shake hands with me.'

### THE SHOE-BLACKS OF PARNASSUS.

By H. LASCARIS.

THERE is nothing sensational in the Parnassus of which I propose giving a short account, unless it be in the rapidity of its rise, and the widespread field of its activity. The 'Parnassus' of Athens is a literary association, holding its meetings in a magnificent building, where subscription balls, lectures, and concerts are given for the benefit of the evening classes held there for shoe-blacks, and other waifs and strays. The whole working of this establishment and its admirable results are so wonderful, that an inquiry into its modest origin and gradual development should be interesting.

The late antiquary, Mr Lambros, was well known all over Europe for his splendid numismatic collection. He had five sons, all of whom are now leading members of Greek society as physicians, professors, and antiquaries. One of them, Mr Spiridon Lambros, is now completing for Cambridge his catalogue of the manuscripts in the various monasteries of Mount Athos. With such a learned father, it was but natural that the sons should feel attracted towards books and study. The four youngest brothers early conceived the plan of forming themselves into a literary club, 'with power to add to their number.' This association was kept a profound secret at first, even from their eldest brother. With the enthusiasm peculiar to their age, they styled their club the 'Parnassus.' One of the brothers was appointed honorary secretary, and the report of the club's first meeting is written in a baby hand, but quite legible: 'The first meeting of this club, consisting of four members, took place on Sunday the 9th day of October 1865, at 11.40 A.M. At this meeting it was suggested that the committee should buy a box of envelopes for the use of the club. The suggestion was agreed to by all the members. The meeting broke up at 12 o'clock.'

These mysterious meetings used to take place in the housemaid's room, which was safe from intruders, being on the basement. The young members read papers on history, literature, &c. By degrees the little fellows disclosed their secret to a few of their friends, including the eldest Master Lambros, who all joined the club. Most of these have since become celebrated all over Greece, and many of them are known throughout Europe. As the number of the members increased, it became necessary to hire a room for the meetings of the club. Mount Lycabettus was considered quite outside Athens at that period, and a room was

therefore hired there for a few drachmas a month. In order to keep down the expenses of the society, it was agreed that the members should take it in turns to sweep and clean this room, and that letters relative to the meetings of the club should be delivered by the members themselves.

When they took possession of their new quarters, it was felt that every one ought to contribute something to the club pocket. Money was carefully saved up for this purpose, and we find several entries of books, photographs, and small articles of furniture. Master Koromilas, who is now the editor of a successful daily paper, contributed a lamp. This gift seems to have been the source of much animated discussion on the part of the members; all those whose turn it was *not* to trim the lamp giving it an excellent character.

Soon after the removal of the club to new premises, it seems that the elder boys had persuaded Dionysius Lambros to retire, as they felt it was humiliating to have in their midst a member still in petticoats, they having all reached the dignity of knickerbockers. Mr D. Lambros is a well-known antiquary and numismatic collector. In fairness to him as well as to the club, it must be added that he was re-admitted a few years afterwards.

It was not long before the club appointed a committee chosen from its midst for awarding prizes to the best written essays and poems. Although these meetings had been held with enough mystery to satisfy even a Nihilist, a gentleman with a white beard found his way there one evening—no less a person than Mr Dragoumis, the editor of the *Pandora*, who gave the boys a capital notice in his magazine. This article led several youths to join the 'Parnassus.'

It is amusing to compare the income and expenditure of a few drachmas a month with that of 1894-95—namely: Expenses, 33,625 dr.; receipts, 34,269 (that is, as the drachma equals a franc, £1385). As these juvenile members grew up, they one by one became university students, but one and all remained true to their club, which is now the most important literary association in Greece, and still continues to award prizes for the best literary composition of the year.

While they were yet young and obscure, one cold winter's night the poet Basiliades and one or two other members, including Mr M. Lambros, were walking home from their club, when they came upon a little figure crouching beneath the porch of a church, and nearly frozen to death. Presently they came upon another, and then another, in the same plight. This made a great impression upon them, and remembering their own comfortable homes, they wondered whether anything could be done to improve these poor children's lot.

At the very next meeting Mr Basiliades spoke of the pain he had felt at sight of all these forlorn children growing up in ignorance of every law human and divine, in the midst of a society of which they would, no doubt, one day become the curse, while a little kindness and a helping hand held out to them in time might convert their lot into a happy one, and make them useful to themselves and to



others. The young poet's enthusiasm was contagious. It was at once agreed that the club should be opened to these children, and that the members should undertake to teach them reading and writing and arithmetic, and endeavour to instil into their hearts the first principles of religion and morality.

Such is the simple and unostentatious origin of one of the most useful philanthropical institutions of Greece. The newspapers soon published leading articles on these evening classes, which made many in and out of Greece take an interest in so novel an undertaking, and subscriptions and even legacies now came freely from Greeks all over Europe. Two years after this school had been established, its founders could already rely on a sum of 10,059 francs per annum, and the 'Parnassus' of Athens began to be copied in many provincial towns of Greece.

To fully appreciate the usefulness of such an institution, it must be borne in mind that Greece had only recently risen from bondage, and that even schools for rich men's sons were few and far apart in Athens. No one had ever thought of teaching the lower classes. The country was poor, and books were a luxury even among the rich. So eager were the little street arabs to avail themselves of these evening classes that the zealots, if somewhat inexperienced, teaching of the members was soon found insufficient for the daily increasing number of the pupils, and it was superseded by that of professional masters; but it has remained an inviolable rule that at least one member of the committee must be present every evening during the hours of tuition.

The pupils consist mostly of shoe-blacks, whose work is over by sunset, but many errand-boys, newsboys, and even domestic servants, gladly avail themselves of the excellent teaching of this establishment. It is a curious thing that, with the exception of servants, who come mostly from the islands, the other boys all seem to choose their business according to their birth-place; for every errand-boy comes from Corinth, every shoe-black from Megalopolis, and every newsboy from Gorthinia. This rule is so general that one might search Athens through for a shoe-black from Gorthinia or a newsboy from Megalopolis, without ever finding one.

Before the establishment of these classes, it was usual for a certain set of men to go round to the places mentioned above, and hire boys of their parents for some hundred francs per annum. These boys were brought to Athens, and worked to the utmost by rough masters, who treated them cruelly and fed them shamefully. The 'Parnassus' has taken the greatest pains to abolish this inhuman practice, by writing to the parents of such children and explaining that, even as a speculation, they might make at least five or six times as much by letting their children work on their own account. They also shut their door against boys as long as they remained in bondage. Thanks to the 'Parnassus,' it is now most rare to find a child thus oppressed, and the traders are beginning to find that the business is an unprofitable one.

Such is the good result of this institution

that, whereas only a few years ago the shoe-blacks and errand-boys were considered the most disreputable little fellows in the town, the cap worn by the 'Parnassus' boys is now looked upon as a sufficient security for entrusting the wearer with the most valuable parcels; their honesty has now become proverbial. Masters are now anxious to obtain servants from their ranks.

In order to encourage habits of thrift, the committee has established a savings-bank, where every pupil may bring his earnings once a week, and receive interest thereon at the rate of six per cent. He is free to withdraw all or part of his money whenever he pleases. The interest was originally paid out of the club's funds, but when the depositors grew so numerous that it was no longer possible to do this, Mr M. Lambros, general secretary and ex-member for Arta, generously came forward and offered to be their banker. As the money passing through the 'Parnassus' savings-bank is about twenty thousand francs per annum, and he loses about twenty per cent. by the arrangement, this was a very kind offer.

Although the 'Parnassus' has now removed to one of the most spacious buildings in Athens, the applications for admission to its evening classes are so numerous that it is necessary to refuse many applicants. The number of pupils now amounts to one thousand three hundred and thirty-five. They are all gratuitously provided with books and writing materials. Besides the members' subscription, presents, and bequests, the 'Parnassus' now receives a small government subvention, and an allowance from the city of Athens. Its funds are also increased by means of the annual subscription ball, and the lectures that are given in the upper part of the building. Last year a novel experiment was made in these rooms. Mr Polites, Mr Lambros, Mr Talacosto, and other well-known professors and literary men, gave a course of lectures for ladies on history, poetry, &c., and a course of religious lectures was given during Lent. These were attended by the *élite*, including the Queen and the Princesses Sophie and Marie. This experiment proved so successful, that the lectures for ladies will probably become a regular institution at the 'Parnassus.'

The literary club itself is divided into four departments: (1) Fine arts and literature; (2) law and political science; (3) philosophy and archaeology; (4) physics. The debates and the papers read at these meetings are published in the club's yearly pamphlet.

Not content with their teaching among the poor, the 'Parnassus' commenced a fresh undertaking last year—that of assisting released prisoners. It has been proposed also to start an economical kitchen, where 'Parnassus' boys may have a good dinner for a few pence. Mr M. Lambros has explained that their object was not to form philosophers or literary men, but to give the boys a little practical knowledge which would enable them to carry on their trade in a sensible way, and provide them with amusement for their leisure hours. They know of more than five hundred of their former pupils who are settled all over Greece

as agriculturists, mechanics, farmers, and shopkeepers. One of them is managing an important Greek business in Calcutta. In one or two cases of exceptional talent and application, the club has helped the pupils to follow a course of special studies. They received a letter of thanks lately from an old pupil who had been appointed professor of Literature at the university of Athens, and another of their old pupils has become manager of the 'Parnassus' of Pyrgos.

All Athens rejoiced a short time since when a little 'Parnassian,' who was selling lottery tickets for the Archæological Society, happened to keep one on his own account, and to win the first prize, consisting of twenty thousand drachmas. Lambros himself assisted the boy to get the money and to place it at the bank. On being asked what he would do with the money, he calmly replied that he hoped there would be enough for all he was intending to do. 'In the first place,' said he, 'I am bound to give a thousand drachmas to my pal, for when I was going to the drawing, he asked me what I should give him if I got the first prize, and I said a thousand drachmas. Then I am bound to improve our village church, for when my father gave me his blessing before I started for Athens, he said he hoped God would help me to grow a good man, and come back and be useful in our village; so I stopped on the road and went into our little church, and promised God that if He made me get on and come back as my father wanted me to be, I should improve that church and always be good. So of course I shall do that, first of all. Then I must give my sister a dowry: two thousand drachmas will be enough for that. There are not many girls in our village that get so much. I hope the "Parnassus" will let me give two hundred drachmas for a prize for the first boy in my class; and the remainder of the money will go to pay my father's debts, and start a little shop, so that I can keep him, as he is getting rather old for work now.'

The boy carried out all his plans, and the last time the club heard from him, he informed them that, having prospered in his business, he was about to marry, and ended by asking Mr Lambros if he would give away the bride.

### THE FORGED MADONNA.

By R. M. STRONG.

#### CHAPTER I.

It was the hour of sunset, and all Florence lay bathed in the full mellow radiance. The long level shafts of light fell warmly and lovingly and with a lingering caress on every turret and tower, every cupola, buttress, pinnacle, and spire; deepening the shadows and forcing up the lights of Brunelleschi's monster dome, and gilding and glorifying the already glorious city with a thousandfold richer loveliness, a quite indescribable splendour peculiar to the place and hour; bringing out the warmth of the soft sienna browns, and the rich purity of the purply grays, or still more delicate dove-colour of the weather-stained marbles of Giotto's famous campanile; sharpening each vein and

shaft, and sparkling from every mullion and capital, and rousing myriads of answering reflections from the glass of window and mosaic, and from the gold of finial or cross. Farther afield were groves of olive-trees and rows on rows of stately, solemn cypress, in sharp contrast to the white walls of some villa or castle nestling in their midst; below, the gently gliding Arno flowed softly, smoothly by; while high above all pulsed the ineffable, lustrous purity of the azure sky, so deep, so soft, so sweet, as surely no other sky was ever yet, or ever well could be.

Away up on the terrace of San Miniato, drinking in the full beauty of the scene, stood a man and woman. Spite of the warmth and sunshine, the man looked careworn and haggard, and was leaning partly on a stout stick he carried, and partly on his wife's supporting arm.

Presently, with a deep irrepressible sigh, he turned to address her: 'Yes, it is indeed a Paradise on earth; but for me it has the hectic loveliness of "approaching death. Oh Elsie!" he broke out passionately, 'it is killing me—killing me! and what—what will become of you?' And his eyes sought hers with a hunted, desperate appeal that she found it hard indeed to meet.

And truly, Elsie Maynard, strive to hide it from her husband as she might, was well-nigh desperate. He, Geoffrey Maynard, was an artist; clever, but with his way still to make. In the sudden flush of a fleeting prosperity, the outcome of his first success, he had ventured to link her fate with his, and bring her to Italy to share the struggle with him; and after an all too brief season of happiness almost without alloy, had come the swift menace of poverty's wolf to haunt their humble door. At first he had spent the time studying the gems of the Pitti and Uffizi galleries, until the sudden loss of his expected patron left him stranded and barely able to find the wherewithal to live, however poorly, in their attic home. Still, somehow, live they did: they were well and strong, and, being young and inexperienced, could hope for the better times that were so cruelly long in coming; until as winter passed away, and spring gave place to summer, when the long hot days—none too long for all he found to do—coupled with the hope deferred, the repeated disappointment, that sooner or later eats the stoutest heart away, sapped his overtaxed strength, and now, as he said, the very beauty of the glorious summer sun was killing him, dragging him down, and he must go to some less enervating clime, or surely die. And both knew that to go was impossible. They had nothing, absolutely, beforehand, and only so long as he could work had they been able to keep pace with their sternly reduced expenses; while that very day the brush had fallen from his nerveless hand to warn him that the crisis was fast approaching when, for a time at least, he would have to paint no more.

Vainly had his wife tried to bid him not despair. The words sounded as a mockery from her own hopeless lips, and died away to end in a long silence as they stood there on the old terrace, whither they had gone for a breath of air. And oh! how much greater a mockery it all seemed to the miserable pair, that glori-

ous, pitiless sun, and that scene so wondrous in its fatal beauty. Both were so cruelly helpless, so far from friends or home; while she, poor English girl, what could she do, an alien among strangers, to win for him the means to get away—only to get away—to England—anywhere, where there was not this horrible enervating heat?

'Come, Geoffrey, you are taxing your strength too much. Let us go—home.' And the last word seemed to pain her even to pronounce it, so bitter was its contrast to her latest thought.

'Home—ay, home!' he murmured bitterly. 'Would that we might go—home!' And with that his hand pressed her arm more heavily, and they walked slowly down the hill and across the many-arched bridge over the river, when, feeling somewhat better, nothing would serve but they must turn out of their way and go round by the Piazza del Duomo to rest on Dante's seat and take a nearer view of the glorious cathedral and Giotto's campanile—that bright, smooth, sunny surface of glowing jasper, spiral shafts, and fairy traceries; that serene height of mountain alabaster, coloured like a morning cloud, and chased like a sea shell—whose contemplation, spite of his overpowering anxiety, the artist found inexpressibly soothing.

'There,' he exclaimed at last. 'It has done me good; I feel better now: let us go.' And still leaning on his wife, they passed on together, under those famous Casa Guidi windows, to where, up a side street, they turned presently to enter beneath an archway into an old courtyard.

A strange old-world place, with a curious air of aloofness from the stir of common life; so near, yet so remote, that one would think Death itself almost might have passed it by. With the stone of its arches and mouldings all crumbling, and weather-stained to soft warm browns and tender grays, and, all lichen and creeper crusted as they were, forming the loveliest possible background to the two or three picturesquely attired women grouped lazily about the central fountain, whose musical drip, drip hummed a low undercurrent to the still more musical-spoken words issuing from the soft Tuscan tongues.

Through the arch and across the courtyard crept the artist and his wife, followed by curious but not unkindly eyes; while the idle, gossiping chatter died away to a low murmurous refrain, through which the soft plashing of the falling water defined itself more clearly as the pair passed on to mount the wide stone steps and cross the uneven, irregular mosaic giving access to the spacious entrance-hall, beyond which lay all the home they knew.

'Ah! the poor English!' sighed one dark-eyed handsome woman sympathetically as they disappeared. 'She will not have to help him thus many times more. Soon—unless there is a change—will he be carried down—feet foremost to his long home. Is it not so?' And she turned inquiringly to the rest, who sighed with her their unanimous assent; while said one: 'Never more wilt thou have to sit there, Marietta, dressed in thy best. Truly he has painted thee for the last time.'

'Ah! and what a painter he was!—But what of that? *Che sara sara*. The cruel Death comes to us all, both rich and poor alike!'—this with some complacency, spite of the speaker's sympathy so recently avowed. 'Not that they were any richer than one's self. For they lived—body of Bacchus, how they have lived! So barely, so'—And the full tide of gossip flowed freely on.

Meantime the two had slowly mounted the last flight of stairs and entered their attic room, which was at once studio, sleeping, dining, and reception room. Beyond the easel, a small round table, and a couple of chairs, furniture there was none; while in the farthest, darkest corner, behind a curtain screen, faded indeed, but carefully patched and darned, there stood a miserable apology for a bed.

The husband sank into a chair, struggling hard to get his breath, the while he glanced round the sordid room as though in search of something, finally resting his eyes on a heap of dusty canvases with a gloomy, distraught air.

'No, not one: not a single picture left to sell. And old 'Tonelli has had them all. And oh! the money he has made! And now, he will not advance one solitary farthing more, though he knows our desperate need. If only we had twenty pounds!—But there, one might as well wish for twenty thousand!'

This he murmured while his wife paused as though half doubtful. She had gone to the cupboard, thinking to fetch the last drop of wine: but no, the bottle was dry; and she stood there, glancing round the bare room, absently twisting her wedding-ring—the last thing of value she possessed—round and round on her finger before suddenly she cried: 'Hush, dear!—here is 'Tonelli. I hear him coming up the stairs!'

And sure enough, old 'Tonelli it was; the famous bric-a-brac and picture dealer from the piazza below.

Old 'Tonelli had just had an idea, an idea that promised money, else would he never have mounted so high.

Two hours before, in his dusky, overcrowded shop, he had been showing a wealthy customer round—one already well and favourably known to him, an American millionaire—who, seized by that *cacoethes carpendi*, that rage for collecting, was making a sort of royal progress through Italy, buying neither wisely perhaps, nor yet too well, whatever took his fancy at the time, for his new brown stone mansion facing Central Park.

Stopping before an easel half turned from the light, he had drawled: 'Say now, 'Tony, what have you here?' And he essayed to draw the picture round.

'Ah! signor, that is not to sell; that is but to clean and restore. The signor will permit me'—And he wheeled the large studio easel where the light could fall full on the painting, then slipped aside as he added: 'Ah yes! but indeed that is not mine to sell. The more the pity. It is superb, magnificent! a genuine Andrea del Sarto—that!'

'Why, if I know anything about it, that is

the smoke-dried affair they had hung over the altar at that little convent chapel away up on the hills.—But what have you done to it, eh?’

‘Ah! yes, it is the same. The chapel is being restored, so why not the picture; therefore have they sent it to me.’ And the old man carefully removed a speck of dust from the face with a dingy old silk rag.

‘And a very tolerable restoration you have made—almost a renaissance, eh? When I saw that thing before, I would not have taken the dingy old panel at a gift: looked no better than a public-house sign; but now—why it’s as fresh as—as paint.’

‘Yes, signor, that is the perfection of my art, my secret; known only to myself. You talk about painting—pouf! You can find twenty of the artists to paint you such a picture as that, but where is the one to restore it, to bring back the first freshness, the bloom of its youth—but me.’ And old Tonelli gazed proudly at his handiwork.

‘Myes, it does look something like a picture now; before, it might have been— But who did you say was the artist, eh?’

‘Andrea del Sarto, a most splendid example of his later style; painted from his wife, just before he died of the plague in fifteen hundred and—’

‘H’m! She don’t look much of a plague, though one never knows; but do you mean to say it is three hundred and fifty years old?’

‘Yes, it was painted after he came back from France, when he—’

‘Scooped the old French king’s money; oh! that’s all right! I remember now; read all about him in Baedeker, or Vasari, or one of those fellows. And it’s a genuine specimen, eh?’

‘Perfect, and perhaps the best he ever painted.’

‘I never met an example that wasn’t. Though now I come to think, I don’t believe I’ve got a Del—Thingamy. Pity those old fellows all painted so much alike; shows a sad lack of invention—imagination. If I’ve bought one Virgin Mary since I came here, I’ve bought at least a dozen; and you can’t tell one from the other. Still, if it’s a genyoine Andrea del—yes, Sarto—why, I’m bound to have one, so I reckon we’d better trade. What’s the figure, eh?’

‘The figure, Holy Virgin! The figure is the blessed Madonna herself.’

‘Oh! come, haven’t I seen some thousands of her by this time! Must have been rather gone on having herself painted. But I mean the price.’

‘Oh! signor, for the price. I told you the picture is not for sale.’

‘Yes, I know you did, but that is a flam, of course; we know all about that. Don’t you waste time trying to rig the market. See here, Tony, I’ll tell you what I’ll do. If that really is an undoubted Del What-you-may-call him? I’ll give you two thousand five hundred dollars for it, down on the nail.’

‘Ah! but indeed, signor, it is impossible!’

‘What! Not enough? You extortionate old— Say three thousand.—No? Great Scott! what an unconscionable— Here, I’ll make it

three—five—and that is all I mean to go on that hand.’

‘Ah! if only it were mine, but—’

‘You stick to that, do you? But even if it belongs to those frowsy old nuns up there, why, four thousand dollars would build them a new chapel, and fresco it all the way round!’

‘But not with Del Sartos; they would not part with this, their choicest treasure, for—’

‘Double the money; come, what do you say?’

And at this offer the old man’s hands were stretched out involuntarily, quivering with greed, while his voice sank to a plaintive whimper. ‘Eight thousand dollars! Holy mother of Jesus! What a sum! And I cannot— Ah! but what if I could!’ And he stopped suddenly with his mouth agape, as an idea flashed across his subtle scheming brain.

‘What! you are coming round? I thought that would fetch you. Say, now, is it a deal?’ And the American took out his cheque-book and fluttered the leaves tantalisingly before the other’s eager eyes, as he went on: ‘Or must I cry off?’

‘Eight thousand! Oh! if only I— But there, signor, indeed it is not for sale; I swear it, by the picture itself, I—’

‘I’ll be shot if I don’t think you are only bluffing, after all. But there, I’ll go one better; I’ll say nine thousand dollars, and nary another cent.’

He waited as the old dealer sank down into a carved oak chair that was fortunately near to receive him, and sat with his hands clutching at his hoary locks, while a curious look of illumination gradually stole into his eyes.

‘So! that takes the trick, eh? I thought it would, but—’

‘Ah! no, signor, not—not now.’ And the old man pushed back the hand that was preparing to write out the cheque. ‘Not now,’ he repeated; ‘but, if I *can*—find the way to—’

‘Why, certainly; you’ll work the oracle. I can see you mean business, by the way you eye the ticket; better let me make it out.’ Here he approached the picture, and as though afraid lest he should walk off with it under his arm, the dealer cried out in an agitated voice, little more than a whisper: ‘No, no; not now. I must have a little time to—to—’

‘Oh! if there’s any hocus-pocus to be done, why, I’m not having any. I—’

But old Tonelli had risen from his seat and walked away; and the American, with a queer look of comprehension as the dealer paced excitedly up and down the shop, quietly proceeded with a sharp penknife to cut an almost imperceptible mark at the right-hand lower corner of the back of the panel on which the picture was painted, before, as the other returned, he asked quietly: ‘Wal, made up your mind to trade, eh? because if not, I’m off—I—’

‘Yes, yes, signor, if it is at all possible; that is, if it can be—bought, I—but it will take time—a little time. Say in a week from now, I will undertake to deliver this most marvellous masterpiece, if—’

‘Look here, Tony, I mean business, if you don’t. Ten thousand dollars, and no more “ifs,” replied the bidder coolly.



'But yes, signor, and indeed it shall be done.'

And with that, after showing his customer to the door, the wily old fox came back and sat eyeing the picture closely with a curiously absorbed and attentive frown, before in the end he rose and repeated firmly: 'Ten thousand dollars! Body of Bacchus, it must and shall be done!'

### AUCTIONS AND KNOCK-OUTS.

A good deal of pretty and sentimental writing has at different times been indulged in on the subject of auctions. The pathetic spectacle afforded by the rude scattering of the Lares and Penates of many worthy but unfortunate families to the four corners of the world, or, to be more accurate, to the various brokers' shops of London, has often been held up to us as one eminently calculated to enlist our sympathies on behalf of those whom hard fate compels to relinquish their cherished possessions and valued relics, for the sake of the prosaic yet highly necessary purpose of paying their debts. And there is no doubt a great deal of sentiment and pathos, and even romance, to be evolved from the subject; yet one must not forget that, like everything else, it has two sides—that familiar to the outer public, and the other, with which only those engaged in the business are acquainted.

An auctioneer is, legally, considered in the light of an agent between the public who wish to sell, and the larger public who buy, some whether they wish to or not. This definition, however, very inadequately defines his multifarious duties. Those who imagine that to sit in a species of pulpit, and perform mysterious manœuvres with an ivory hammer for a few hours, is the extent of his labour and responsibility, are vastly mistaken. It is not in the rostrum that he passes the most anxious moments. Selling has, by constant repetition, become mere child's-play to him, and he knocks down gems of art and bundles of old clothes with equal indifference. No, it is in the privacy of his office, when interviewing would-be vendors of valuable property, or, still worse, when the sale is an accomplished fact and he must endeavour to soften the dread tidings of a result far contrary to their hopes, that he passes through the most trying ordeal. Then it is that the sublime qualities of patience, meekness, and toleration are called into play. Then it is that he realises the sad truth of Carlyle's famous saying respecting the character of the majority of the British nation, for surely never was any man in any profession so worried and plagued by ignorance as he.

Strange as the assertion may appear, much of this is attributable to what, in the abstract, is a noble and praiseworthy sentiment—friendship. The people who come and drive the poor auctioneer almost distracted are usually the victims of injudicious advice on the part of friends. For instance, a lady bristling with importance desires to see the principal. She has an old picture to sell, that a friend has

declared to be of considerable value, and having been recommended to Messrs Jones & Brown, she wishes for their advice on the subject of offering it for sale by auction. She would not like to give it away, although she has no particular use for it, and would prefer the money; but she understands that it is worth at least twenty pounds. Quite so; would the lady be good enough either to have the picture forwarded, or indicate where it may be seen, and Messrs Jones & Brown will be most happy to advise. Meanwhile, their terms for sale are ten per cent., five per cent. if bought in, and she can, of course, place such reserve on the work of art as she thinks fit. In due course the picture arrives (freight *unpaid*), and proves to be a poor thing, value about thirty shillings for the sake of the frame. A few days pass and the owner calls again. In his most suave manner, our friend Mr Jones or Mr Brown endeavours to convey to the lady the intelligence. He does not plumpily tell her the exact value he places on her masterpiece—the shock would be too great—but delicately hints that the estimate her friend has formed is somewhat excessive, that the subject is not of the kind then popular, and, in fact, any excuse which occurs to his ready wit. Well, what would Mr Jones advise? But Mr Jones desires to avoid any advising whatever. His firm will be happy to offer the painting on the usual terms if the proprietors will duly instruct them as to reserve price. And so eventually the lady leaves the picture for sale, and places on it a reserve of five pounds. Messrs Jones and Brown smile. Their commission is secure at any rate. The day of sale arrives, and the hapless canvas is duly bought in for twenty-five shillings. Early the next morning the office is again invaded by the lady, eager to learn the result. What! Bought in for twenty-five shillings! It is preposterous, infamous. The affair must have been mismanaged entirely. The firm's conduct ought to be shown up, and so on. Of course Mr Jones is extremely sorry, but it is just one of those chances which will occur in the sale-room. The painting had the best possible opportunity; had it been worth more, it would have doubtless brought it. Meanwhile the account stands at one shilling and threepence for commission, and two shillings for carriage, three shillings and threepence altogether. Would the lady take the picture away then, or should it be sent? All this talk and worry and indignation for fifteen pence! And the case is by no means singular or exaggerated.

It is indeed ludicrous to find what excessive values the general public will put on their possessions, particularly in the matter of works of art or virtu, books, curiosities, and so forth. It is impossible to convince them of their error, and even when the sale has proved that their estimate was altogether false, they will attribute the low price to bad cataloguing, mistaken description, or any cause save the true one. I remember a poor lady, far away in the country, writing to a London firm to say that, being anxious to complete the purchase of a small estate adjoining her own farm, she wished to dispose of a very rare and valuable old book in her possession. She gave the title, and had

to be politely informed that the outside value of the precious tome was—five shillings! This case seems improbable, but it is absolutely true nevertheless.

A very curious feature of auction-room life is the system popularly known as the 'knock-out,' a conspiracy really to defeat the ends of the sale, rob the auctioneer of a share of his commission, and the owner of his profit. It is chiefly practised at what are technically known as 'out sales'—that is to say, auctions held at private houses in the suburbs or remote places; but the plan is largely adopted in London rooms, not as one would fancy by the smaller and more insignificant tradesmen, but also amongst the wealthier and important members of the 'second-hand' fraternity. Briefly, the arrangement is this. Certain dealers who are interested in particular lots in a sale, agree not to oppose each other in bidding, but to allow one or more of their circle to purchase these lots, subject of course to outside competition, at the lowest possible price. It thus happens that, the opposition of the best qualified judges being voluntarily withdrawn, the articles in question are knocked down at a very small sum. After the sale, the little gang of conspirators meet at some convenient place, and the property is subjected to a second auction, at which it probably attains its full price, the balance of difference between the sum actually paid and the second amount being divided between the members of the ring.

An example will explain more clearly. There are, we will suppose, in a certain sale, half-a-dozen 'lots' of choice old china. Four first-class dealers in this property attend the auction, call them A, B, C, and D. It is mutually arranged that A shall do the bidding, and the remaining three keep silent. We will suppose, with a view to simplicity, that each of these six lots is worth, to a dealer, four pounds; but as our four friends are probably the only persons in the room who could dispose of such property, and who understand its value, and as they refrain from competing, it is not at all surprising to find that the six lots are bought by A at the rate of ten shillings apiece. So much for the first stage in the plot. The sale being concluded, A, B, C, and D forgather at some obscure public-house where they can have the use of a private room, and then begins the second auction. Lot 1 is offered, and after some competition, is allotted to C for, let us say, three pounds ten shillings. He pays over this sum to A, who acts as auctioneer, and who, after deducting the ten shillings he has paid for the lot, proceeds to divide the balance of three pounds among the members of the party. Consequently, C gets his piece of china for three pounds ten, and fifteen shillings back into the bargain, while the others each receive a like amount. So with the next lot which D buys for more or less, as the case may be, and in fact the procedure as quoted may serve as an illustration of how the affair is conducted throughout.

It will be seen from this that quite a handsome little amount can be made without any risk or necessity for buying at all. Indeed, attached to every branch of the second-hand

business there is a sort of 'ragged regiment,' consisting of broken-down dealers who have seen better days; younger men who, with a smattering of knowledge, act as jackals to lions of the trade; and still more disreputable and degraded creatures who eke out a miserable existence on charity and such pickings as they can make from the generosity of successful tradesmen. These men never attend the regular sale-rooms. They have no money, therefore cannot buy; in fact, to buy is far from their thoughts. They simply wait about at the 'out sales' for the sake of sharing in the 'dividend,' as the share resulting from the 'knock-out' is termed. The astonishing part is that the big men of the trade not only tolerate them, but actually allow them to participate to some extent in the profits of the day. Not that they take any active part in the proceedings. Many of them indeed never even trouble to inspect the property on which their remuneration depends. Why, then, it may be asked, should established tradesmen with money in their pockets, who really desire to buy, to the best advantage of course, admit to their little conspiracy such worthless individuals as are described? Well, the more respectable are tolerated, because, although they may not have the means of purchasing, they possess what in such business is almost as important as money, namely knowledge, which would enable them to run up the prices to such an extent as to seriously diminish the 'dividend.' As for the others, their claim is chiefly on the compassion, not the cupidity of the clique. They are allowed to make a few shillings for nothing, purely for the sake of old times, or perhaps also with some little regard to the faint possibility of future service. It must not, however, be supposed that the outsiders here described share to the full extent in the profits of the conspiracy. At these out sales it is usual to have two and even three 'settlements,' the first embracing all members of the trade from highest to lowest, the second excluding those of lesser importance, and the third confined to those who, from the fact of their holding the most money, manage, as is usually the case, to make that most more. These few favoured ones it is who not only acquire the choicest items of the sale, but pocket also the biggest share in the nefariously procured profit.

A fertile source of remuneration to the 'ring' is the rich customer who gives commissions to the dealers. Let it be well understood here that, as in everything else, there are honourable exceptions to a fairly general rule. There are plenty of upright tradesmen in all branches of business who will execute orders at auction-sales honestly and to their customers' advantage. There are, on the other hand, many cases such as this. A wealthy collector named, we will say, Brown, sees in an auctioneer's catalogue a rare engraving or some curiosity which he much desires to possess. Money being no object, he tells Smith the dealer to buy it for him, and, if necessary, to go up to fifty pounds. Now, if Smith were to execute this commission in a straightforward manner, presuming he had to give the full limit of fifty pounds, and that his commission were ten per cent., he would receive five pounds for his trouble. But he sees a way

by which he may not only pocket considerably more, but also oblige one or two friends who, at some other time, will return the compliment. Consequently, he informs the three other dealers likely to oppose him that he has a good commission for this particular print; they agree to refrain from bidding, with the result that Smith purchases the lot for five pounds instead of fifty. He takes care to charge his customer the latter amount, and the balance of forty-five pounds is shared amongst the four, while Smith very likely gets his five pounds commission into the bargain. But, it may be asked, suppose the purchaser finds out that the lot only brought five pounds? Why, then, Smith has a ready and genuine explanation to the effect that he was obliged to make an 'arrangement' with other members of the trade, or he would not have procured the gem at all. As a matter of fact, in such a case as this, the individual who gives the order to buy is the least aggrieved of the parties concerned. He was willing to pay fifty pounds to gratify his tastes, consequently has no cause to complain if called upon to write a cheque for that sum. It is the owner who only gets five pounds instead of fifty, and the auctioneer mulcted of his commission, who are really the injured persons.

The query not unnaturally arises, cannot steps be taken to prevent such proceedings? Well, it is a very vexed and difficult question. If certain men choose to remain silent in the auction-room, you cannot very well compel them to bid; and as the rules say, 'the highest bidder to be the purchaser,' there is no help but to knock the lots down, ridiculous as the price offered may be. The only way of effectually checking these conspiracies would seem to be by attacking the decidedly illegal auction at which the goods are subsequently disposed of; but if any steps were taken in this direction, it is highly probable that the astute tradesmen would devise some scheme to legalise their proceedings, by taking out an auctioneer's license for one of their number, for instance.

There seems to be no remedy for the state of affairs at present existing, and intending vendors should remember to protect themselves by always placing a reserve on their property, being also careful to limit their ideas of value as much as possible.

## HIS ADVOCATE.

By GEORGE G. FARQUHAR.

WHAT formed the ostensible pretext for the quarrel is matter about which none care to burden their memories at this late date. Outside any doubt, it had concern with something trivial and foolish enough in itself; but the breath of ruthless war was in the nostrils of the angry brawlers, and the heat of their tongues waxed fierce above any petty warranty. The muster of weather-bronzed fishermen stood placidly at audience, bearing no share in the ado, yet far more keenly expectant of its issue than their stoical demeanour would seem to declare. For they knew the real secret of the jangle now going forward—the true, deep origin

of the bitterness, the fume, the fury, with which the two young smacksmen jerked out their venomous words. Ha! was there not a maid in it? Yes, they knew; and they possessed themselves in patience for the end of it all.

Broad, upstanding fellows they were, these wranglers, with cheeks tanned nigh to the hue of their boat-sails, stalwart of frame, with thews of steel. As they fronted each other there—their brown necks bare, their hats thrust awry upon their foreheads; their faces sullen with truculence and spite—it might readily be conceded that, for strength and mettle, few men in Port St Bede could boast themselves the match of either Oliver Hird or David Brogden. Of the two, perhaps Dave was actually the more incensed, for whereas Oliver but took on a fearless and contemptuous air, Dave's rugged face became distorted with passion; his brows knotted in a heavy scowl; his long narrow teeth, prominent at all times, now set forth in an ugly snarl at once menacing and repulsive. And the beholders understood that the baring of Dave's gums boded rough weather ahead for somebody. Ere long this forecast was put to the touch of proof, the storm bursting suddenly in a thunderclap.

'Hark to him, mates!' Dave cried, glancing sharply round, his voice shrill with rage. 'Hark to him now! Did ye ever hear o' t? Losh, but he's a liar! He's got his tongue twined roun' a dumb lie now, I tell ye!'

The accusation had found utterance; to the minds of the fisher-folk there was but one mode of adjustment when disputes came to this pass.

'Eh, Noah,' chirruped old Yarden, taking the cutty from his lips. 'Did ye hear that? Wah, he gies Oliver the lie, mon!'

'Oh, ay,' replied Noah Masker grimly. 'It can't stop at that. One of 'em's got to be paid for 't.'

In the hush that had fallen upon the group—a silence only broken by the lapping of the waves upon the boat-shore—this whispered aside carried far and distinctly. Dave caught at the suggestion greedily.

'Let him break his teeth ower that,' cried he again. 'A lie—a flamin' lie!'

For a moment it seemed as if Oliver would accept the challenge; he stepped forward a pace, his eyes flashing, his nieves clenched. Then he fell back, controlling himself with difficulty, and wheeled about as if to leave the spot.

'Nay, never, Oliver—never!' exclaimed half-a-dozen disgusted onlookers. 'Thee's never goin' to take that fro' him 'bout a word!'

'Deed, but he'll stan' it quiet enow,' put in Dave sneeringly. 'A liar, I says, an' a coward forbye. See ye here!'

With that he strode hastily forward, swung round his arm, and brought the flat of his circling palm full thwack against the left ear of

his rival. For a second's space the marks of the impact hung white upon Oliver's ruddy skin; then his mouth tightened, and a heady rush of blood turned his cheeks to a dull scarlet.

'Ye shall ha'e your will,' said he, in low swift accents. 'I'll fight ye, man—ay, I'll fight ye now!'

A murmur of approval welcomed this note of defiance, and as the combatants stripped for the trial, the throng of bystanders ranged backward, eager to grant free ring and no favour. The sooner the bout was decided the better; and, in their view, it could be settled honourably and finally in no other fashion.

The antagonists stood on guard, their brawny arms stretched out, stern, dogged, vengeful. Warily they eyed each other, on the alert for an opening. At length Dave drove out his great fist, Oliver warding the blow with his right forearm, and returning it furiously upon the other's mouth. The savage buffet stung Dave to madness; it stirred the devil in him. With intent to bring his weight to bear, he lowered his head and rushed afresh upon Oliver, enfolding him in a vice-like hug that knew no relaxing. This way and that they lurched, with interwrought limbs, the pebbles cracking and flying from beneath their heavy sea-boots, their husky gasps forced from them like jets of escaping steam. Down they pitched at last in a struggling heap, rolling and writhing together on the shingle with the frenzy of maniacs.

Suddenly there came a diversion.

'Hoot—tuts; we'll hae none o' that,' ejaculated Tony Yardes, breaking from his place in the ring. 'See ye, lads, see ye at them great teeth o' Dave's?'

As a matter of fact the said teeth could not be seen at all, for they were fixed deep in the fleshy part of Oliver's left hand.

'Nay, nay; we don't hold wi' sich-like,' added Noah authoritatively. 'Fair fight we'll no interfere wi', but we'll stan' no cannibalism i' Port St Bede.'

The belligerents were dragged apart, their cut and bruised visages running blood and sweat adown grimy furrows. A precious couple, in all conscience!

Before this, however, the prolonged hubbub near the boats had drawn the regard and curiosity of the shore-biding folk, many of whom, men, women, and youngsters, set off hot-foot to learn the significance of the unwonted brabble. Among the foremost to reach the boats was she on whose account this battle-royal was being waged—Joan, the daughter of 'Ringie' Verity, the cobbler. A jaunty, well-favoured lass she looked in her short merino skirt, blue woollen stockings, and striped bodice—a real bargain, assuredly, at the price of a mere scratch or two. Except for the faint flush that mantled her cheeks when she saw who the combatants were, she evinced no marked interest in what was afoot, but stood on the fringe of the crowd, unremarked, and apparently indifferent. Why should she disquiet herself? In her experience two men never yet laid claim to one woman without the affair being put to the test of the strong arm. This was the spirit of justice which imbued the fathers; this the spirit which

imbued sons and daughters—an atavism, a survival of primitive conscience and conduct. Besides, Joan had perfect faith in the merits of her 'man.' No, there was no call for her to interpose.

But when she heard Tony's shrill cry of indignation, and saw Oliver's gashed hand, and the blood still hanging upon the lips of his enemy, she broke abruptly into the arena—her dark eyes scintillating with new-born fire.

'Shame o' ye!' she exclaimed, confronting Dave with scornful mien. 'Shame o' ye for't, Dave Brogden!'

'Nay, nay, Joan,' Oliver put in, sheepishly. 'There's a pair o' us. I dunno but what I'm more i' fault nor'—'

'Not ye, Oliver. I've heard him threat ye many's the time. Ay, to my face he's threat ye oft. I'd no fear o' which had been t' likelier lad if t' feight had been up an' honest. He's a foul man to do sich wark as this. Gowf, but I'll ha'e nowt but cross talk for him long's I live—never, never! Get ye goan, Dave Brogden—get ye goan!'

While this reproof was in the making, Dave had donned his coat and hat without once lifting his eyes to hers; but at the final outburst he pulled himself straight again.

'Joan,' he said, and his voice quavered out of control. 'I can't speak to ye; ye're a woman. An' forbye that, ye know—how I—how I—' 'Deed, I'll be steppin' now, as ye say. But I ha'e no' done wi' him yet—soul o' me, no! I ha'e no' done wi' him yet!'

Swinging round, he slunk dourly away. The neighbours straggled in his wake, all gabble and chat, tearing the rights and wrongs of the quarrel to rags as they went.

Ten days later, Dave was seized with a quaking dread lest he should be balked of his revenge for all time. The gaunt spectre of Death bade fair to forestall him. Oliver's younger brother had but just escaped from the grip of the disease when Oliver himself was stricken low with diphtheria. Good Dr Marshall's intermitted visits were at once resumed, yet it would seem with less happy results than heretofore. The dire contagion had taken fast hold, and the poor fellow's strength was waning day by day. Although the doctor strove to appear hopeful, his heart was assailed with misgivings.

And outside the house, be the weather what it may, to and fro upon the narrow side-walk prowled the sullen-eyed Dave, restless, implacable, hovering like an insatiate ghoul about the dwelling. He was not to be choused out of all the joys of vengeance, even though he could not compass it with his own hands. Yes, his would be the triumph after all, his the last, longest, and heartiest laugh. Oh, but it was fine to loiter there, with quickened ears listening for the querulous plaints and fevered agonies; almost seeing the frantic fight for air, the painful ebbing away of life. Oh, but it was grand to call up the things now passing within those four walls—well-nigh as sweet as if his own fingers were nipping the windpipe. One thing only damped Dave's satisfaction. Joan had constituted herself joint-nurse with Oliver's mother; day in, day out, she was ever



there—anxious, tearful, loving soul. Dr Marshall gave it as his opinion—the very morning on which he had consulted with the great surgeon from Morperland, when a tracheotomy-tube was inserted in the patient's throat—that if watchful nursing could win back vitality, Oliver was in no danger. Ah, but nursing could not do that—always. No, no; Oliver would die—he *must* die. And afterwards, although Joan might perhaps cry and fret a while, in the end she would dry her eyes, smile, and look about her again. Yes, being a woman, she would do that in the end.

On the first day after the operation, towards dusk, when Dave was of a mind to abandon his ghastly patrol for the nonce and hie homeward for a meal, an orphan cousin of the sick man dashed, hatless and affrighted, from the house.

'Heigh, Tom o' Ezra's,' shouted Dave, as the boy sped past. 'What's amiss? Wheer's thee boun' i' such a flurry?'

'For t' doctor. Oliver's worse—vastly worse!'

'Oh, ay. 'Deed, is he?'

Presently the lad came back, tearing down the cobbled street at a breakneck pace.

'Dr Marshall's no' at home. He's goan ower to Wayne's farm, i' t' Hollow, to 'tend Mrs Wayne. Whatever's to be done?'

Evidently he expected no reply, for he did not halt, but bolted straight into the cottage. Following him, Dave likewise stepped over the door-stone into the kitchen, where Oliver's father had been awaiting his nephew's return.

'Oh dear, deary me!' moaned the old man, when Tom had told him of the doctor's absence. 'I'm feared—I'm sore feared! Ay, but thee send across to t' "Trawlers," Tom, an' ask for t' loan o' Joe Morpheys' galloway. Stir thee, now! Ride ower to t' farm, an' let t' doctor gallop here o' pony back. Mebbe he'll be i' time—mebbe—mebbe. Dear, oh deary me!'

Away the lad scurried once more, his uncle and Dave being left standing there, on the flagged and sanded floor of the living-room.

'It's real good o' ye to call, Dave,' murmured Oliver's father, misjudging the visitor's motives. 'I've catched glint o' ye, off an' on, these two-three days back. It shows a reight feeling, after what's come 'tween you an' Oliver; he'd 'a' fain seen ye if ye'd but come forward—deed, he would. An' now I doubt he's too far gane to know ye. Ah, he's badly this day—reight poorly is he. But it'll mebbe be t' last chance—good sakes, I hope no'; but mebbe 'twill—an' if ye've no fear o' being smittled, an' would like to see him, well then, just ye step up aboon wi' me.'

His grizzled head bowed in dole, old Hird unhasped the door in the corner, whence the stairs led up to the bedrooms. The hysterical sobs and lamentations of Oliver's mother struck upon their ears as they ascended.

'T' missus takes on sadly ower it all,' said Hird, in a strained undertone. 'She's driven fair crazed wi' cark an' grievin'. I'll e'en get her to come away for a bit o' rest, poor body; she'd be the better for't, I'm thinkin'. Bide ye here a minute, Dave.'

After some audible demur, Oliver's mother,

clinging to the arm of her guidman, tottered wearily out of the sick-chamber.

'Now ye go in,' whispered her husband, as they passed. 'There's but him an' Joan. Go ye reight in.'

A candle was burning in a flat tin sconce over the chest of drawers; a blue pitcher filled with wall-flowers, sweet-williams and 'stortiums,' taken from the front garden-patch, stood on the ledge below the latticed window. Near the head of the bed, which had been dragged out from the wall, sat Joan—pale, stolid, and apathetic. She looked up when Dave entered, but made no sign and spoke no word, turning her gaze instantly back upon the unconscious form of him whose struggle was with Death.

Nor did Dave attempt to loosen his tongue. He drew up at the bed-foot, twiddling his hat by its rim, swaying the weight of his body, first to one leg, then to the other, yet making no move to quit the room. Truth to tell, he had no such immediate intention. He was there to feast his eyes, and he meant to surfeit them ere he went.

Not long had he to wait for a foretaste of the wild pleasure he promised himself. A convulsive paroxysm shook Oliver like a pennon; his arms tossed backwards and forwards over the coverlet; he gurgled and choked as if he would never more regain his breath. When, in some degree, the seizure had passed off, it left him weak and exhausted, his respiration confined to a series of hard, stridulous gasps that betokened the inevitable end. Minutes were now the measure of his life's span.

And Dave was well contented that it should be so; his narrowed eyes beamed out the satisfaction he felt. Let the doctor come when he pleased now, he would be too late. A mile and a half to Wayne's farm—a mile and a half back! Ah, that was a rare distance, and a horse can't fly. Dave hugged himself at the humour of the notion. Things were shaping well for him—particular well!

In the meantime Joan had risen from her seat and tenderly moistened the parched lips of the sufferer. Then she performed an act which, coming all unexpectedly, struck Dave with amaze and awe. Claspings her hands, the sickly candle-flare lighting her white, uplifted countenance, she sunk on her knees by the bedside.

'Oh, Heavenly Father, have pity on him; have pity on them he is dear to, an' on them he loves. What can he 'a' done deserving so great pain an' punishment? He's the best—the truest— Oh, God, look down i' mercy on this drearful house, an' spare Oliver for the sake o' them his death will kill. They won't want to live if he's ta'en away. Be merciful—be merciful! Don't let him die! Oh, Lord Jesus, don't—don't let him die!'

In the midst of this wailing appeal, there sounded the rattle of the street-door latch, mingled with the shuffle of slipped feet as old Hird hastened down-stairs to meet the doctor. Apparently, neither Joan nor Dave had heard the outside clatter. The girl's supplication went on unchecked, and Dave still regarded her in curious bewilderment. Her fervour moved him strangely.

'Losh, I can't thole this,' he growled under his breath. 'Like enow, it'll be t' same. Anyways I've a mind to try it. Yes, I'll do't—I'll do't!'

Swiftly he crept to the head of the bed, opposite to where Joan knelt; stooping suddenly, he thrust his face deep down under Oliver's chin. There followed a fierce incatch of his breath, a hollowing of his lean cheeks, and he stood upright again, spluttering blood from his mouth.

Joan sprang up, her eyes outstanding in horror. The deed reminded her hideously of one she had seen Dave perpetrate not many days before. Those great teeth had haunted her dreams ever since. Now, heedless of the presence of Dr Marshall and Oliver's father, who had both entered the room in time to witness Dave's proceedings, she burst out into angry revilings.

'Oh—oh! You black savage—you foul, mad devil!'

'No, no,' interposed the doctor suavely. 'You mistake the lad's object. Look!' pointing to his patient. 'Look! he breathes more freely already.'

It was true. Oliver's breathing was decidedly less laboured and stertorous; the leaden colour, too, was fast fading from his face.

'It was the only thing to do,' added Dr Marshall. 'The membranous growth all but blocked the air-channel, and the obstruction had to be removed somehow to avoid suffocation. I should have had to resort to suction myself—not, however, by means of the mouth. That rough-and-ready method is extremely dangerous and reprehensible. Umph! But I am forgetting myself. Here, my good man, rinse your mouth out at once—thoroughly, mind you, thoroughly. You're a brave fellow, indisputably, with more sense than most.'

'Faith, then, I'm no' claimin' it,' returned Dave glumly. 'I saw t' doctor do that, over at Morperlan', when my sister's youngest was down wi' diphthery.'

'Ah, yes; I recollect the case. Poor Wharton! He contracted the disease, I believe, and died. Yes—yes. Extremely risky business—extremely so! Now, as to our patient here. We must keep up his strength, and he will pull through all right now—yes, he will pull through!'

Dave picked up his hat from the carpet, where it had fallen.

'We'll see ye again, by-an'-by, Dave?' exclaimed old Hird, gratitude in his tones. 'Ye'll call in i' t' morn, mebbe, all bein' well?'

'Nay; I'm boun' to Morperlan' first thing. I've shipped as mate o' the *Swallow*, an' she sails wi' t' tide to-morn 't' neet. Port St Bede 'll see nowt o' me fro' this day on.'

He turned towards the door.

'Dave,' murmured Joan softly, 'I'm grieved—sore grieved over what I said to ye but now.'

'Oh, ay, lass; ne'er dwell on't. I couldn' bide to see ye fret so, an' no' help ye when I could.' With a quick, impatient gesture, he added: 'But ye're all wrang i' your notions. I did nowt for him—nor wouldn'. I'd ha'e watched him choke there wi' gladness i' my

heart, for I hated him—ay, I hate him now! 'Twas no' to ease his pain. Ech, no! But 'twas just for pity o' thee, Joan—'twas just to comfort thee!'

### VANISHED GOLD MINES.

AN interesting chapter in the history of gold and silver mining which still remains to be written is that relating to lost mines—that is, mines of fabulous richness, once discovered by some lonely prospector, and then lost by some fateful incident or chain of accidents. In every gold and silver bearing district stories of these marvellous 'finds' are current, and West Australia, the latest gold-field of all, is not without its crop. There is no inherent improbability about the better-known mine myths, if we may so term them, because in a wild country where there are practically no landmarks, it is by no means a difficult matter for an uneducated man, with his tremendous secret to keep, to make a mistake as to his location. Besides, the happy discoverer may die on or near the spot where he struck his bonanza, and his fate remain unknown even after his bleached bones have been found in the wilderness years after. Or again, like Amos Albright, he may die after imparting his secret to his dear ones on his death-bed; and from an inaccurate or insufficient description, they may never be able to reach the mine and avail themselves of the riches there hidden.

The Rocky Mountains and the Sierras are especially rich in mythical mines, and any man who may find himself in one of the many camps still to be met with in those wild, and for the most part untrudged regions, will be regaled at the saloon bar with enough stories to fill a book. The 'Lost Cabin' mine is a good specimen of the kind of thing we have in mind. One day, forty years ago, three men named 'Kit' Carson, James Kinney, and a half-breed Blackfoot came into Fort Randal, on the Missouri River, with a bagful of nuggets and a story of gold deposits of incredible richness in Cabin Creek, a branch of the north fork of the Cheyenne River, just west of what is now the Montana boundary line. Both were old mountain men, and Carson enjoyed a great reputation as a guide; which lent some additional colour to the story. Everybody went crazy. No white man was supposed to have been within five hundred miles of the place, and indeed men were (at that time) being cut off by Indians within five miles of the fort. Carson and Kinney went on a week's 'spree,' and soon gambled away their gold, but showed no disposition to take a party to the new Eldorado. The United States officers at the fort discredited the whole thing, and dissuaded the crowd from following it up; but men started out, and none returned. Presumably, the Indians saw the last of them. The red-skins, no doubt, knew of the existence of gold there, and of course wanted for several reasons to keep the whites out, and they did effectually for thirty years. A thousand lives and a mountain of treasure were spent in seeking for the Lost Cabin, but in vain; and it was only quite

recently that other gold discoveries were made along the same creek. In the light of this fact, were the men lying? If they were, how did they become possessed of such a treasure as they unquestionably had with them?

The story of the lost 'Lake of the Golden Bar' in Alaska is one of the strangest ever narrated. There is an expedition even now on foot to look for it. In August 1884, three adventurers, named Hamilton Galt, Charles Ulrich, and Walter Stanford, went tramping north from Butte, Montana, and at the end of eight weeks found themselves near the Yukon River, on the eastern slope of the St Elias Range in Alaska. There were well-watered valleys, where game was abundant, and traces of gold were found everywhere on the 'bars' and shores of the streams. The sun was shining gloriously, when suddenly a small lake came into view. In the words of Galt himself: 'Its rays struck with a slanting flood upon the bar, and scintillated in a thousand golden slivers directly across the water into the dazzled eyes of the thunder-struck men.' There were bad Indians roaming round, but what cared they now? All three yelled with delirium. They threw down their rifles and swam for the bar—a small island in the lake, thirty feet from the bank. The first nugget weighed six pounds, and was almost pure gold. This was Galt's catch. Stanford, whose nickname was 'Ole,' gathered up nuggets and scooped up 'dust' as fast as he could transfer the stuff from the ground to his pockets. But it remained for Ulrich to make the biggest 'find.' He had landed a little lower down. In walking through the shallows towards the shore, he struck his foot against a sharp rock, as he thought. But as he lifted it out of the water, there was disclosed a nugget of almost pure gold, estimated at fifty pounds, or not much less than that figure in weight.

For forty days these men worked as no coal-heaver in the world ever worked, and 'cached' gold valued at about ten thousand pounds sterling, in addition to the two nuggets found on the first landing. They experienced great difficulty in ferrying it across the water between the bar and the shore, and this occupied much of their time, and prevented them from gathering more gold. Besides, they needed food, and hunting claimed a goodly part of their time. They took turns at providing food for the camp. Their idea was to gather enough gold in the cache to make them all rich, before the actual cold weather set in, and then to go south and to return again with a proper equipment. Just as preparations had been made for this move, a large body of Indians attacked the 'prospectors,' killed 'Ole,' and burned their hut; the two others got separated, and had to leave most of their treasure behind them and pick their way south as best they could. Ulrich, it turned out afterwards, contrived to reach Fort Wrangel penniless. Galt, who was afraid to go near the camp because of the Indians, kept in the neighbourhood for two days, and then commenced his lonely tramp back. There was no sun to point him right. The long winter nights had commenced. It became colder and colder: the thermometer ranged far below zero. Snow

came in masses and blinding blizzards. 'I wandered on and on,' he says, 'always with the instinct of self-preservation strong within me. I never thought of giving up. Hunger, cold, snow, ice, fever, delirium—nothing mattered; but life—sweet life. I went on this way for weeks. Through that terrible winter of 1884 I wandered in that awful wilderness.' Paralysed, bleeding from wounds on the body, head, and face, frozen, the sight of one eye nearly gone, attenuated to the mere shadow of a man, he at last came to a human habitation on March 25, 1885, about twenty miles from 'Bonner's Ferry.'

The latter part of this story sounds rather weak, but it is certain that Galt had one thousand pounds' worth of gold in his belt when he came to 'Jim' Edwards' place at Bonner's Ferry, and he is going again to the 'Lost Bar' lake to find the gold which is his and Ulrich's. It is pretty generally believed, apart from this particular case, that Alaska is simply teeming with gold, and the United States Government has within the past year despatched a scientific expedition to gauge the extent of the mineral wealth of this far-off and much neglected possession.

The story of the 'White Cement' mine is a curious one. One day a gold-seeker named White came into Horse Head Gulch, California, from Northern New Mexico, and took out of his pack a number of pieces of what looked like hard white clay glittering with specks of metal. Before night it was known in the camp that White's specimens showed one thousand ounces to the ton. The excitement was intense. In the morning a party called on the owner of the specimens, and told him that he must pilot the men to his find. He should have the pick of the claims, and help to work it, but go he must; and on his refusal, was warned that his life would not be worth shucks if he 'stood off' the camp. Then he consented. The trail went down and across the Rockies. It led along rocky trails, up and down canyons, and across mountain crests. On the evening of the third day White said the miners were near to their journey's end. Every one lay down that night expecting to arise a millionaire. In the morning, White was gone, and had left no trace. One-half of the party, after incredible suffering, got back to life and civilisation; and yet, despite their story, one hundred men started back over their trail two days later. Three years after, White reappeared in Salt Lake City with his cement specimens as before, incredibly rich, and again disappeared, and from that time to this, has never been heard of. But men still wear out their lives in seeking this 'Lost Cement' mine.

For many years there has been a legend prevalent in Port Hickson and in the country round about it, that somewhere in the Shawan-gunk Mountains in that vicinity there is a cave or mine containing deposits of wealth in gold and silver; and in spite of long, tedious, and unprofitable searches that have from time to time been made, there are still scores of people who believe fondly in its existence.

The legend of the hidden treasure is, in effect, that years ago—nobody knows how many—an

old Spaniard or an Indian lived somewhere in the Shawangunk Mountains near Port Hickson. This person went by the name of Ninety-nine. Why Ninety-nine, the misty record does not pause to say. But of this thing the legend is positive: Ninety-nine was overpartial to whisky, and it was his favourite pastime when he was drunk to scatter gold pieces about the settlements, to pull a handful of diamonds from one pocket, and a string of pearls from another, and from other parts of his opulent person clusters of rubies and glittering lots of other precious stones, and parade about among the Dutch settlers an animate and inebriate Golconda. No one could ever find where Ninety-nine lived. He never permitted any one to accompany him from the settlements except once, and that was a short time before he disappeared for ever from those merry scenes. The exception was a boy named Benny Depew, and it was when he was in his cups that Ninety-nine took him blindfolded to the mountain and showed him over his treasure-house. Heaped in glittering confusion on the floor were bars of gold and silver, and domes of coin. From every side resplendent jewels glared at him with myriad eyes of fire, while Ninety-nine thrust his hand into a cask, and taking it out and holding it above his head, released what he held within it. A stream of flaming diamonds fell back into the cask. These were some of the things that Benny said he gazed upon in Ninety-nine's cave. But the greedy custodian of all that fabulous wealth permitted him to feast his eyes but a short time. Then he blindfolded Benny again and led him away. When the bandage was a second time removed from his eyes, Benny was standing on the top of one of the highest peaks of the Shawangunk overlooking the Mamakating Valley. Ninety-nine was gone. And he was never seen again. This story has an unmistakable suggestion of the Arabian Nights, but only a few years ago a company was formed with a capital of \$25,000 to search for the lost treasure. Half the capital was paid up. However, the only exhaustive work done was by the treasurer of the company. He did it on the company's treasury. When his work was done, the treasury was exhausted of the \$12,500, and he had gone somewhere. The company turned its attention away from hunting for the lost cave, and went to hunting for the lost treasurer.

The 'Peg Leg' mine in Southern California is the one that has been most sought after. A gold-miner, John G. Smith, known as 'Peg Leg' because of his wooden leg, came into Los Angeles one day in July 1871 with his mules laden with several sacks of gold ore. The rock was assayed by mining experts in the place, and the news quickly spread that Smith had ore that ranged in value from \$450 to \$800 a ton. It was several weeks before Smith could be induced to say a word about where he got his ore. When at last he did open his mouth he refused to say anything more than that it was down across the Colorado desert in the mountain-range in San Diego county, and that until he knew whether this mine was located in the United States or Mexico, he must keep the rest a strict secret to himself. He said that

he had spent five months in the locality of this mine with two half-breed Pima Indians, who had guided him there in payment for his kindness rendered to them in serious illness. He told again and again, and always with rare exactness of detail, the surface indications of his mine, the direction and slant of the gold-bearing ledges, the surrounding geological and mineral conditions and characteristics, and the work he and his Indian assistants had done in determining the quantity of the ore.

One fine day Smith disappeared from Los Angeles, and news came across the country a week or two later from San Bernardino that he had been there and hastily and secretly 'fitted out' for a camp of several months in the mountains and a mule ride across the desert. He had, at the last moment, taken two old mining chums with him and set out in the night. Several years later, dried and mummy-like remains of the two men who accompanied the old man, and the skeletons of the mules and remains of their wagon and mining-tools, were found one hundred miles out on the Colorado desert, but not one trace of Peg Leg. It is improbable that he could have escaped from that spot in the desert on foot.

#### AFTER MANY YEARS.

THROW wide the window; let us stand

And listen to the Christmas chimes,  
Which rain glad music o'er the land,  
As in the old dear bygone times,  
While life was young, and hope was new,  
And we two dreamt sweet dreams together,  
And thought that summer breezes blew,  
Although 'twas wintry weather.

The path that winds across the moor  
Is white with crisp and glistening snow—  
The path that led me to your door  
One golden Yule-tide long ago;  
When, by the glossy holly tree,  
Where knots of coral berries shone,  
With many a softly uttered plea  
I won you for my own.

Now, Time, which shows but little care  
For maiden charm or manly grace,  
Has left its silver on your hair,  
Its tell-tale furrows on my face;  
And down the pleasant moorland way,  
Amidst the joy-bells' merry din,  
Our laughing children trooped to-day  
To bring the Yule-log in.

Sweet wife, uplift your eyes to mine!  
And tell me—are you happy still?  
My heart has aye been true to thine,  
Through all life's mingled good and ill:  
And in this memory-haunted room,  
Our merry tribe about my knee,  
I vow the years have held no gloom  
Since you kept house with me.

E. MATHESON.

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